

AB 222
(Emmerson)
Burros

Sponsor: Moreno Valley Animal Control

Wild burros have been free to roam in the Reche Canyon area of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties since the 1950's. As the burro population expands and the nearby human population increases, burro/human conflicts are occurring more frequently. Since 2003, 37 burro/vehicle accidents have been reported, resulting in a total of 17 burros being killed. Additional accidents may also be occurring which have gone unreported. In October 2005 a vehicle/burro collision resulted in the death of a 21 year old woman from Rialto. The burro involved in the accident was also killed.

Accidents between burros and cars have increased in recent years as the burro population expands, and as development encroaches into burro habitat. Feeding of burros by the general public is a contributing factor in many accidents because burros crossing the highway are lured by food and water placed for them by residents. Human and burro safety will continue to be at risk, particularly in proximity to busy highway crossings.

As the local animal control agency, Moreno Valley's Department of Animal Services is unable to provide for the well being of the burros because current state law does not permit anyone, including state and local agencies "to kill, wound, capture, or have in possession any undomesticated burro." Animal control officers cannot legally capture burros to move them to safer locations or modify their habits by establishing feeding stations in safe areas. A burro that is suffering from a broken leg or other painful, debilitating injury may not legally be treated for its injury. As a result, burros sometimes suffer for days after an accident before dying in a remote location rather than being humanely disposed of. Until the law is re-written, no agency can legally provide for their well-being.

The Reche Canyon burro herd includes about 50 animals living adjacent to city neighborhoods. It is the only known herd in the state living solely on private lands. Because existing law prevents state and local agencies from effectively managing the herd, and because there is no federal land involved which might trigger federal protection, the herd will remain essentially unmanaged until the law is changed. AB 222 would authorize the appropriate state and local agencies (law enforcement, animal control, Department of Fish & Game, etc.) to manage burros by allowing them to capture, relocate, and treat undomesticated burros on public or private lands within their jurisdiction that are not protected by the federal Wild Horses and Burros Act.